

committed can certainly be “forgiven under the rubric of ‘pioneering,’” and no apology is necessary.

— Michelle Cruz Skinner  
Arizona State University

**Miriam Makeba and James Hall. *Makeba: My Story*. (New York: New American Library, 1987) 249 pp., \$18.95.**

Like much of her music, Miriam Makeba's autobiography is both personal and political. As it details the story of a young girl's coming of age and search for identity, it simultaneously records the history of a country struggling for independence. In the prologue, Makeba compares herself to a South African bird soaring above the horror of apartheid (aparthood) which was instituted in 1947. As she recounts the details of war and injustice in direct, understated, idiom-filled prose, and as she intertwines details of ancient customs with the realities of modern technology, Makeba suggests that music best expresses the tragic subject of the inner exile of the South African people.

Makeba is an exiled political dissident who sees little or no distinction between herself and her beloved country. Although she was denied a sense of history until she was past childhood, Makeba provides a readable anthropological and historical overview of the South African situation. She records the changes undergone by herself and by Africa since her birth in 1932, and she provides the reader with a variety of terms with which to explain religious and social customs. For example, it is the custom for children's African names to comment on events surrounding their births. Since both mother and baby almost died during Miriam's birth, she is called Uzenzile (Zenzi), or one who does not learn from her mistakes. She is given the English name, Miriam, when she begins to earn her living through the magic of music.

The details of Makeba's early life are paralleled with descriptions of African history in a poetic style which interprets idioms and translates vocabulary from the rich, yet oppressed, South African culture. Her story reflects the never-ending attempt to escape the prejudice and injustice which the South African people endure. As she catalogs her personal accomplishments, Makeba states that she speaks for all of her people. She, and they, have overcome terrific obstacles through hope, determination, and song.

Makeba's musical ability afforded her opportunities denied to most Africans. At an early age, Makeba pledged to use her gift of song to help her people, and she has employed her unique talent to meet and to influence some of the most important and powerful men and women of our time. In 1986 she won the Dag Hammarskjold Peace Prize, one of her most cherished honors.

Although Makeba has been exiled from Africa for most of her four-decade career, she reminds the reader that she and South Africa are one and the same, that the political situation is slowly improving, and that the plight of her people has not gone unnoticed. Her words are made more poignant when one remembers that Makeba published her book only three years before Nelson Mandela was released from prison.

Makeba's book, which includes sixteen pages of photographs, is a very readable combination of history, anthropology, political science, and religious studies. This text is appropriate for Black Studies, Women's Studies, Cultural Studies, and general Humanities courses.

— Nancy Hellner  
Arizona State University

**Trinh T. Minh-ha. *Woman, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989) viii, 173 pp., \$39.95; \$14.95 paper.**

In *Woman, Native, Other*, Trinh T. Minh-ha has taken on an ambitious task, which is to explain something of the problems confronting non-Western women writers who publish and are subjected to critiques within the established paradigms of Western scholarly discourses. Must she and her fellows position themselves as "writer of color," "woman writer," or "woman of color," she asks, as she proceeds to display the boundaries others place upon their freedom to create their own realities and establish their distinctive voices. Whereas other women theorists of postcolonialism and feminism have challenged Western conventions largely within the linguistic and stylistic conventions of the West, Trinh T. Minh-ha eschews neat generalizations to offer the flavor of the fragmentations, odd juxtapositions and dissonances which she perceives as inherent in her writers' efforts to explain themselves and their female worlds. This does not make for an easy read. It does, however, prick the bubble of Western—above all, male Western—complacency about their capacity to appropriate the forms for interpreting the lives of women of color, in terms which will hopefully elicit a salutary self-consciousness, mixed with shame in those who seriously address her densely-textured text.

The tensions for women of color writing today, Trinh argues, have their origins in multifaceted forces of power and dominance. To begin with, how do they face the sad fact that to be literate, and have access to publishing, of itself marks them out as privileged beings, while at the same time they may receive from their own kin scant respect for their apparently odd predilection for writing, so at odds with local models of appropriate womanly behavior. This conflict is all the keener because male traditions of writing invite women writers to adopt the powerful position of "author," a position of authority,